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## SEX HYGIENE

By ELISABETH COCKE, R.N.

“THE facts of sex are pure enough. It is the falsehoods about sex that are impure.” This is the *crux* of the sex hygiene problem. And yet, in disentangling the true from the false, in cleaning the filthy accumulation of lies, emphasized from age to age and generation to generation by prudery and mock modesty, how skilful must be the handling, how delicate the touch, lest these stains be rubbed in deeper, instead of being cleaned away! And who are to do this wonderful cleaning up? Parents, teachers, doctors, nurses, welfare workers?

In a paper read at the Child Welfare Conference in Richmond, Va., in May, 1911, Mary Johnston, the author, says, “No blame attaches to the men and women of the world of yesterday, that they did not know and therefore could not practise, but blame will attach to the men and women of the world to-day, blame will arise like a heavy mist, enclose and darken us, and cut us off from any praise, any love, respect or reverence from the world of to-morrow if, knowing as we do to-day, as we increasingly know, we yet behave ourselves as indolent cowards, giving no help to that future which we might so strongly help! . . . There is, to-day, an army of men and women who have it passionately at heart that the child, which each one of us has been, shall no longer be left to grope in blindness as to the meaning of his being and his place among the generations; as to the debt he owes the future; as to the *noblesse oblige* of cleanliness of body, mind and soul; as to the sacredness of that which he is too often taught to consider vulgar and vile; as to the inferiority, weakness and vulgarity of that which he too often comes to consider manly and spirited; as to the office of parenthood, the clean, the aseptic facts of birth, growth, reproduction; as to the necessity of self-control, and the honorableness of practising it; as to the sacred trust he has in hand—the word of his life given him by all the resounding past, and by him, in turn, to be given to the unuttered millions of the future. . . . To the future, believe me, however we may take it—to the future it is a matter of life and death. We cannot aid the past, but we can aid the future. The past will have nothing to say to our efforts, but believe me, the future will have much to say. . . . There comes an outcry: ‘Contaminate the child’s mind! Sully native innocence which, so long as we tell it nothing, knows nothing! Teach it vulgar things about sex!’

. . . People, people! It *is* being taught vulgar things about sex—but not by those who preach eugenics!”

Accepting the dictum that we are justified in teaching sex hygiene, we realize at the same time in the words of Stanley Hall, “The most difficult, delicate, and at the same time important part of moral education is that which concerns sex—difficult because so complex and little understood, delicate because the facts in the field are so concealed by reticence, prudery and lies, and important because conditioning the most vital interests of the individual and the future of the race.” And with this burden of obligation upon us to the present and the future we face one of the greatest problems which has ever faced mankind—the problem of who is to give the instruction and how is it to be given? It is granted by every one, the advocates of the instruction as well as by those who are against it, that it can result in harm as well as good, that to be given at all it must be so given that the child will not realize it is being instructed specifically in matters of sex. In the home it can come as part of the confidence and candor of parent with child. And just here I would like to call the reader’s attention to the exquisitely told story, “The Angel of Birth,” by Kate Whiting Patch in the June, 1911, number of *The American Baby* (published in Chicago).

Beginning with almost infants, the little ones can be interested in the everyday things of nature, the sowing of seeds, their sprouting and growth, the fertilization of plants by bees carrying the pollen from male to female plant, the development of the chick and of birds in the egg, and the analogy between these and the mother animal which carries the young in its own body till it is developed enough for birth. Gentle emphasis on these things will prepare the mind for a realization of the human functions of reproduction, for the responsibilities of parents, that high ideals may be maintained throughout childhood and youth, and restraint and purity observed, that when the girl or boy is grown, he or she will be fit for the responsibilities of having little children of their own. This is the method worked out and taught by Miss Laura Garret, of New York, who is devoting her life to instructions along these lines. It is an inspiration to hear her give an address on this difficult subject, and a most practical help to all who wish for information and instruction on how to teach it. She is consecrating her life to one of the great vital causes of the ages.

That there are some most strenuously opposed to instruction in sex hygiene can be truthfully granted, but the consensus of opinion from educators, sociologists, physicians and nurses is that the time is ripe for instruction to be given in matters of sex. But there is almost

universal agreement that the giver of instruction must do it carefully, veiling to a certain extent sex emphasis, giving it without self-consciousness, helping untrained minds to see facts in their right position and proportion; helping not only the mind to see, but the character to act aright and develop in strength, purity and self-restraint. I think Miss Garret's idea of pictorial suggestion very practical. Show the class, or the individual, child, or girl or boy, a picture of some saint or hero. The Madonna, St. Michael chaining the devil, Saints George or Margaret with the conquered dragon, Sir Galahad, Joan of Arc, and numberless others. The story of Joan of Arc is particularly fine for growing boys and girls, showing that though she was exposed in camp and city to insults, and was falsely accused of unchastity by her enemies, she was proven pure and commanded reverence and respect from even the roughest of her soldiers and the lowest about the camps.

But we must not expect wise sex instruction to do it all. It is a powerful factor in the cause of purity, but sporadic education alone is not enough. The sex question touches every person, every home, every community. Only by every community, every home and every person in those homes making themselves responsible for some wise effort on the behalf of humanity, can disease and moral wrong and the effects on future generations be done away with. First of all, and most important, should be an honest facing of existing facts; granted they are loathsome in the extreme,—so is small-pox or typhoid fever, or many other diseases which can be enumerated. We have learned that only by a vigorous campaign can these be eradicated. When the women all know, and the men know that they know, that about ninety per cent. of the men in the United States have venereal diseases; that about eighty per cent. of the operations on married women are the result of gonorrhœal or syphilitic infection, innocently contracted from their husbands; that, according to Dr. Dale's article in the July, 1911, *JOURNAL OF NURSING*, he puts it at a conservative estimate that there is more venereal infection among innocent married women in this country than among professional prostitutes; that "eighty per cent. of all the purulent ophthalmia of infants is gonorrhœal, and from fifteen to twenty per cent. of all the blindness in America is due to this cause; that, "according to Neisser, Germany alone has 30,000 blind persons whose affliction was caused by gonorrhœal pus, and in Paris forty-five per cent. of all the cases of blindness have been due to this infection;" that syphilis is a disease which can be transmitted in full virulence to even the third generation; that sterility is a common result of gonorrhœal infection—can any one sit back in inactive complaisance, saying "I must have no knowledge of such con-

ditions; they are for the physician, the nurse, the welfare worker alone; it is not seemly that such conditions should be alluded to in decent homes, among decent people." Oh, people, people! men and women, mothers and fathers! Can you not see that it is your silence, your prudery, your mock modesty, your selfish self-consciousness in speaking of the pure, the clean and high functions of reproduction and sex matters;—or, worse still, of never speaking of them at all, which is resulting in wrong information and evil influences? You are leaving those to whom you owe counsel and help in the most vital things of life to get their knowledge, contorted and besmirched with indecencies, from servants, play-mates, vulgar advertisements in the press of the country, from exaggerated and filthy sources; you are lending a hand in their contamination, and blunting their sensibilities and lowering their ideals. Can you not realize the privilege of helping children by telling them a few of the simple facts in the simplest possible way, and your power, if it is rightly used, in giving girls and boys the sympathy and help they need, as they enter their teens and develop into adolescence? In these crucial years is made or marred the character, often the mind of the child, for "as the twig is bent, the tree inclines." If in childhood and youth they are taught the need for self-control and the beauty of it, that true, noble manhood is always courageously clean manhood, if girls are helped to realize that silly self-consciousness with boys can result in harm, and boys are taught to revere and respect womanhood, there will be fewer and fewer who will go astray.

A grave phase of the sex problem is the "medical secret." In my career as a nurse, I feel that I am making a very conservative statement when I say that of the cases I have come in contact with fully half have been venereal in one form or another, and of these, I can truthfully say that I have been told of possibly a third, to preserve caution for both my own sake and for fear of others being contaminated. It has been my experience that reputable, supposedly-conscientious surgeons and physicians more frequently leave a nurse to find out from the course of treatment ordered for the patient, than tell what is the trouble, and that every precaution must be used. Now there seems to be an awakening to the fact that more is due the community at large than to one individual, but there is much yet to be wished for in the matter of reporting cases to the health authorities and the registration of such cases. I believe if no marriage certificate were allowed to be issued till the name of the man had been looked for on the registry of venereal cases, and issued only when a clean bill of health can be given, the numbers of venereally-infected would drop to a minimum, and prostitution de-

crease correspondingly. Until this secret scourge has public punishment of some sort, there is little hope for any considerable abatement of the evil. This suggestion may seem an unjust discrimination against the man, but as the man is the chief offender, certainly in the contamination of his innocent wife and their offspring, discriminating legislation against him is not unjust. Will some one ask, "If there is to be legislation for examination and registration of the venereally infected, why not go to the root of the matter and examine and register the prostitute?" This has been done, and this is what Dr. A. Blaschko, secretary of the German Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, says: "The examination and compulsory treatment of prostitutes in Germany has not only failed of its hygienic purpose, but has actually increased the spread of venereal disease, in that it has given a false sense of security, and, in that it has encouraged men, by the arbitrary discrimination against women, to suppose immorality necessary for the preservation of their general health."

Not only in education and legislation is to lie the control of the social evil. The foundation must be character building, courage and self-control, and those women who even yet do not realize that they and their children are in the clutches of a grim Giant Despair must rouse to the consciousness of the horror of the social evil. "The secret is out, and women must no longer endure that the sacred purpose of marriage be blasted by the introduction into marriage of infamous disease and death, due to the immorality of men."

Before closing, it seems well to call attention again to the great care which must be exercised in the handling of this subject. Nothing calls for more infinite tact, especially in talking to children and boys and girls as they approach puberty. Where biology and physiology are part of the school curriculum, the teacher must exhibit no self-consciousness, or the matter is made one of sniggling and obloquy to the pupils, instead of earnest interest and natural instruction.

But in spite of discouragements and blunders, we are upon the upward path, the goal is beyond question, the ideal is high. We are but part of a great army of educators and workers amongst whose names it is an honor to have ours enrolled, and our efforts, if earnestly given, no matter how small our place, will help to carry forward this great cause, to purify life and the world, and to give to the future a nobler and a higher race.

For the help of those interested in sex hygiene, is appended a list of books, magazine articles and pamphlets upon the subject: Chapman, Rose R., *The Moral Problems of Children*; Dock, Lavinia L., *Hygiene and Morality*; Hall, Winfield Scott, *Reproduction and Sexual Hygiene*;

Henderson, Charles W., Education with Reference to Sex; Lyttelton, E., Training of the Young in the Laws of Sex; Morley, Margaret W., The Renewal of Life; Morrow, Dr. P. A., Social Diseases and Marriage; Saleeby, Caleb W., Parenthood and Race Culture; Willson, Dr. Robert N., The American Boy and the Social Evil, The Nobility of Boyhood, 50 cents (contained in "The American Boy and the Social Evil"); Hall, Stanley, Educational Problems, Chapter on the Pedagogy of Sex, Adolescence, Youth; Northcoate, H., Christianity and Sex Problems; Janney, Dr. Edward O., The White Slave Traffic in America; Report of the 38th Conference of Charities and Corrections, in Boston, June, 1911, Sex-Hygiene Section; Kauffman, Reginald Wright, The House of Bondage; Summary of the Chicago Vice Commission, in the May number of *Vigilance*; Education with Reference to Sex in the August number of *Vigilance* (published monthly at 156 Fifth Ave., New York City, at five cents per copy); The Cause of Decency, Theodore Roosevelt, *Outlook*, July 15, 1911; Articles on The Causes of Prostitution in *Collier's Weekly*, from time to time, since April 1, by Reginald Wright Kauffman; Articles on the Necessity for Teaching Sex Hygiene, in *Good Housekeeping*, beginning with the September number; Dr. Dale's articles on Moral Prophylaxis, in the JOURNAL OF NURSING since the July number; Instructing Children in the Origin of Life, Elisabeth Robinson Scovil, in October JOURNAL OF NURSING; Leaflets and pamphlets published by American Motherhood, 188 Main Street, Cooperstown, New York; Publications of The American Association of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, New York City.

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## SALVARSAN

BY ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

SYPHILIS is perhaps the most dread disease known, certainly one of the most far-reaching in its consequences. Not only the victim himself suffers; he may communicate it to his wife and children.

The germ that causes the disease had been isolated, *Spirochæta pallida*, it remained to find a drug that would destroy the micro-organism without injuring the patient. Mercury had been found efficacious if persevered with, but a more speedy remedy was desired.

Uhlenhuth, a German experimenter, had discovered that atoxyl permanently cured syphilis in rabbits, but its effect on man was so dangerous it could not safely be used in medicine.

Dr. Paul Ehrlich, director of the Royal Institute for Experimental